PROGRAMS UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Brazilian Association For Standardization's "ABNT - Qualidade Ambiental"

Introduction

The Brazilian Association for Standardization (ABNT) is in the experimental stage of an environmental certification program called "ABNT - Qualidade Ambiental" (Environmental Quality). The program was developed after research was conducted into the experiences of environmental labeling programs worldwide. The results of the study formed the conceptual framework of the Brazilian environmental label. ABNT reports that the program is structured according to ISO draft Standard 14020, "Environmental Labels and Declarations - General Principals," and ISO draft Standard 14024, "Guiding Principles and Procedures for Type I Environmental Labeling." Initiated in 1993, the program is positive, voluntary, and based on multiple criteria. ABNT is a private, non-profit organization, created in 1940 to develop national government recognized standards. The mission of Qualidade Ambiental, the environmental labeling program within ABNT, is to "promote the reduction of environmental burdens and negative impacts related to products or services," by increasing the awareness of manufacturers, consumers, and public organizations regarding the "advantages of adopting products less harmful to the environment." Through its environmental certification program, ABNT hopes to: certify products in the market that demonstrate environmental quality, promote the supply of such products for consumer use, expand the program into other sectors, become well known in Brazil and internationally, and reach financial sustainability. The program is currently working on developing standards in two categories, leather and footwear products and forest products. The program is not yet active, however, and no products have been certified.

Program Summary

Three main groups are involved in the environmental certification process. The Certification Commission is responsible for proposing program policies, and supervises the implementation of these policies and the certification process. The Commission is appointed by the ABNT Governing Board. The membership is meant to provide a balance of interests, where no single interest dominates. It is composed of stakeholders such as representatives from government agencies, industry organizations, scientific and technological institutions, environmental organizations, and consumers. The Certification Commission creates a Technical Committee for Certification for each product category. Representation on the Technical Committee is similar to the Certification Commission, but has a more technical focus. The Committee is responsible for developing the product criteria. Finally, the Certification Department of ABNT is responsible for the operational procedures of product evaluation and certification. The Certification Department is made up of ABNT staff. ABNT - Qualidade Ambiental currently has two product categories. The Technical Committee for Leather and Footwear Products is analyzing the environmental aspects of the

leather and footwear products' life cycle. The Technical Committee for Forest Products is establishing criteria for wood products.

To select the initial product categories for possible standard development, ABNT worked with stakeholders and identified ten product categories. The initial two product categories were chosen when the two industries expressed interest in the environmental labeling program. The forestry industry came to ABNT in 1996 with the idea of developing a product category for forest certification. Forest certification is designed to cover planted and natural forests, and is based on five principles: care for biodiversity; sustainablity of forest resources and their rational use in the short and long term; care for water, soil, and air; environmental, economic, and social development of areas with forest activity; and compliance with government legislation.

To develop product criteria, the individual Technical Committee follows several steps. First the Technical Committees conduct an inventory and develop an "environmental matrix." The matrix relates the productive processes of each material in the product to its environmental impacts on air, water, soil, and noise, as well as with the use of energy and natural resources. The Technical Committee then conducts an Environmental Impact Evaluation by identifying, characterizing, and evaluating the environmental impact of these inputs and outputs. Each impact is classified as being "substantial," "reasonable," "not substantial," or "unknown." Criteria are set by determining the most relevant of these impacts, establishing "threshold values," and using these values as the basis for developing criteria. The criteria development process may also consider industrial performance, trends in improvement, available technology, and economic feasibility.

The draft criteria are submitted for public review, and the final criteria are established following a "consensus process." The ABNT Certification Commission makes the final decision to adopt the criteria and certification procedures once they have been accepted by involved and interested parties. The Technical Committee defines how long the criteria will be valid and when revisions will be carried out. ABNT usually re-evaluates awards every three years. Although no revisions have occurred to date, ABNT expects revisions to reflect changes in scientific knowledge, new industrial practices, and consumer expectations.

Companies submit applications for product evaluation directly to ABNT. The Certification Department carries out audits and tests to determine whether the company and its product comply with the established criteria. The Technical Committees review the test results, inspections, and audit reports, and makes a proposal to the Certification Commission when they believe a product should be granted the Qualidade Ambiental label.

Fees for the two product categories are determined by the Technical Committees. Funding of the environmental certification program comes from two sources. Salaries of program staff are funded by the National Council of Scientific and Technology Development. ABNT funds other program expenses.

Program Methodology

ABNT reports that the program conforms to the draft standards for ISO draft Standards 14020 and 14024. The product categories are selected when industry groups come forward voluntarily. When developing criteria, ABNT collects information from literature, other programs, independent testing, and participating producers. The ABNT methodology is based on Life Cycle Analysis (LCA), and considers the following elements: extracting and processing raw materials, manufacturing, transportation and distribution, product uses, reuse, maintenance, recycling, final disposal, ingredient or materials restrictions, and environmental performance of the production process. Proposed criteria are not peer reviewed, but are stakeholder reviewed. ABNT conducts an environmental evaluation, but not an impact assessment.

Other Information

ABNT staff are involved in the development of ISO draft standards. As the ISO standards develop and change, those of ABNT Qualidade Ambiental are expected to accommodate these changes. ABNT has been a member of GEN since 1996, and ABNT's Technical Director was on GEN's Executive Committee until October 1997. ABNT is beginning to conduct harmonization activities with Spain's AENOR program.

Another mission of ABNT is to promote the adoption of non-environmental product standards in Brazil. ABNT is accredited as a Registration Body to certify according to ISO 9000 standards. Standardization work is conducted by committees made up of representatives from various groups, and the committees attempt to harmonize the various interests and develop standards through consensus. Other product certification programs include: fire extinguisher maintenance, fire doors, sprinklers, civil construction products, cement, liquefied petroleum gas containers, and hotel classification.

References

Associação Brasileira de Normas Téchnicas. *ABNT - Qualidade Ambiental*. Summer 1997.

Associação Brasileira de Normas Téchnicas. General Information. Fall 1997.

Cabral, Frederico José Marques. ABNT - Qualidade Ambiental. Personal communication with Abt Associates. Fall 1997.

Product Categories

Criteria Under Development

Leather and footwear products
Forest products

Categories Under Consideration

Paper
Electrical house appliances
Cosmetics
CFC-free aerosols
Automobile batteries
Detergents
Lamp bulbs
Dyes
Varnishes

Small Spark-Ignited Engine Environmental Labeling Program

The US Environmental Protection Agency is in the process of developing an environmental labeling program for hand-held combustion engines used in lawn and garden equipment. The program will be part of national air emission regulations that limit the emissions of hydrocarbons (HC) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) that small spark-ignited engines may emit. EPA is currently proposing Phase II levels of HC+NOx as part of the regulation, which will reduce emissions by approximately 40 percent from the Phase I levels. Manufacturers representing over 90 percent of the small, hand-held engine industry have agreed to participate in the development of a voluntary environmental labeling program that will award labels to engines that emit a certain percentage below Phase II levels. The EPA is soliciting comment on the development of this program, and plans to release a proposal by early 1998.

References

McCabe, Betsy, US EPA. Personal communication with Abt Associates. Summer 1997.

MISSTAP News, Vol. 4, No. 6, June 1997.

Electric Utility

The Electric Utility program is a pilot program to provide environmental performance information to consumers regarding various electricity providers. As the government deregulates the electric industry, these labels will provide consumers with environmental information about competing electric companies. The three groups involved in developing this program are: the Regulatory Assistance Project (an NGO), the Federal Drug Administration (providing guidance based on its experience with the nutrition label), and the Department of Energy.

Pilot programs have been initiated in several states in which deregulation of the electric industry is occurring. These pilot programs are examining how consumers would like the program to be

organized and what kinds of environmental performance information they would like to use as they choose their electricity provider. Depending on the information gathered by the pilot project, the program could take the form of a multi attribute, positive, seal-of-approval, or a neutral report card, such as the nutrition label, which discloses facts and lets consumers make judgments. Evidence from pilot studies already completed suggests that the latter is preferred by consumers, though no formal decision has been made to propose a particular type of positive or neutral label. Additionally, no decision has been made as to whether the program will be administered by an NGO or the government.

References

Tiesel, Mario. Federal Drug Administration. Personal communication with Abt Associates. Summer 1997.

Indonesian Environmental Labeling

Introduction

Indonesian environmental labeling has been spurred by demand in the export market, where environmental issues have become increasingly important. For example, with forest products, Indonesia's second largest export industry, there has been a growing movement to buy sustainably forested products, and the accompanying call for sustainable forestry certification programs. Indonesian environmental labeling, however, is still in the developmental stages. Thus far, it is still unclear which of three possible groups-- the Ministry of Trade, the Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute, and BAPEDAL-- will be given responsibility to implement a national labeling program. A proposal for the breakdown of responsibility among the groups has been tentatively accepted by all three parties. Under this proposal, the Ministry of Trade would be responsible for the labeling of export products, while the Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute would be responsible for forestry products, and BAPEDAL would be in charge of labeling other export and domestic products. It is clear that each group wishes to be given the primary responsibility for administering an environmental labeling program.

Ministry of Trade

The Ministry of Trade, concerned about potential losses in the Indonesian export market due to international concern about the environment, has sought to develop a national environmental labeling program. Thus far, it has concentrated its efforts on the textile and garment industry.

Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute

Although the Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute has yet to be formally established, its precursor, the Indonesian Ecolabling Working Group, was founded in 1994 with three objectives: first, to establish a set of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management; second, to set up a timber certification program; and third, to design an institutional arrangement for the formal establishment of the Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute. The working group consists of representatives of academic and nongovernmental organizations, and is chaired by the former Minister of Environment. The working group has drafted criteria through consultation with the public and with several national and international wood product and environmental organizations including the Forestry Stewardship Council, Rainforest Alliance, ISO TC 207, and the International Tropical Timber Organization. The draft criteria are directed at securing sustainability of forest productivity as well as its ecological, social, and cultural functions. The working group has also drafted plans for a certification system for sustainable natural forest management. A pilot project is planned in the near future. The working group is also preparing manuals and training materials to be used in the implementation of their certification program.

BAPEDAL

A government agency, BAPEDAL, is responsible for national environmental protection and has also undertaken the development of a national environmental labeling scheme. Although it is still in the developmental stages, the program has established the following three goals: the improvement of environmental quality through the introduction of environmentally preferable products; community education on environmental issues; and encouraging manufacturers to apply for their label and consumers to consider it in their purchasing decisions. The proposed certification process examines the provision and utilization of raw materials, production processes, and waste generation. Thus far, BAPEDAL has studied several foreign environmental labeling programs, held seminars and workshops to disseminate information on environmental labeling, and drafted criteria for several products including pulp and paper, textiles, and leather products.

References

Bratasida, Liana. Director for Technical Development, BAPEDAL. Personal communication with Abt Associates. Fall 1997.

Djalims, Upik. Indonesian Ecolabeling Working Group. Personal communication with Abt Associates. Summer 1997.

Heinke, Gary W. et al., *Final Report: Development of an Eco-label Certification Programme for Hong Kong/ RC96-19*. Hong Kong: Research Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, June 1996.

Germany's Type III Eco-report Card

Germany is in the preliminary stages of developing an environmental "report card." Research has begun on the feasibility and practicality of Type III environmental labeling for Germany. The initial research and development activities are a joint effort between the Federal Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt) and various manufacturers in Germany. This research includes documentation of practiced labeling programs related to Type III labeling as discussed in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) TC 207/SC3/WG1. Also, investigations are underway to determine if it will be possible to incorporate existing private labeling programs with a national Type III ecolabel. Additionally, as part of the program's development, a questionnaire and workshops with representatives of German industrial branches will be conducted to investigate three characteristics of Type III labeling: target groups for the label and the influence of these groups on the format of the label, organization of an administration that will supply third party validation for the label, and development of Life Cycle Analysis methodology.

References

Eva Schmincke, Biologist, Office for Ecological Studies, Germany. Personal communication with Abt Associates Inc., July - October, 1997.

Hong Kong Ecolabeling Scheme

Hong Kong does not currently have an environmental labeling program. A study was conducted (1994 - 1996) by the Institute of Environmental Studies at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), to determine the suitability of an ecolabeling program for Hong Kong. The study examined several well-established ecolabeling programs in Europe, the United States, and Asia to see how their programs were established and to investigate their success. The research team also conducted meetings with industry, consumer organizations, and government representatives to obtain their opinions on establishing an ecolabeling program for Hong Kong.

The study concluded that environmental labeling programs may be established for two primary reasons -- to 1) improve environmental quality and protection through market forces, and 2) assist industries exporting to markets where environmental labeled products are available. It was determined that because Hong Kong is a major exporter, there are several product categories that may be suitable for a Hong Kong ecolabel. The report illustrated a number of such products including: clothing, textiles, electronics, chemicals, plastic products, plastic packaging, metal products, and industrial machinery.

The HKUST research team conducted discussion forums to determine industry's, consumers' and government's opinions on the potential establishment of an ecolabel for Hong Kong. Most of the groups thought that Hong Kong should follow a "wait and see" option. That is, having been

informed of other worldwide ecolabeling programs, Hong Kong should be an observer at ecolabeling meetings (UNCTAD, GEN, OECD, ISO) before deciding to initiate its own program. Another option discussed was for the textile industries to cooperate with one or more of already established, private, textile ecolabels in Europe, two of which have a branch office in Hong Kong. The third option discussed was a "franchise scheme" where Hong Kong industries could work with agents, set up in important export countries, to assist them in obtaining that country's ecolabel. A fourth option is for Hong Kong to join China's ecolabeling scheme, provided China's label gains worldwide recognition.

Costs for establishing an ecolabeling scheme for Hong Kong were determined. Meetings have taken place between Hong Kong's Industry Department and several industries for an exploration of views. To date, the "wait and see" option is being pursued.

References

Heinke, Gary W. et al., *Final Report: Development of an Eco-label Certification Programme for Hong Kong/ RC96-19,* Hong Kong: Research Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, June, 1996.